

1.0 GENERAL DESCRIPTION & BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Rail Division, in conjunction with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), proposes to undertake the CSX Transportation (CSXT)/Norfolk Southern (NS) Railroad Mainline Grade Separation Project (Project) in the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. The NCDOT State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) number for this Project is P-5002. The purpose of the Project is to grade separate the intersection of two major Class I railroads in Uptown (Center City) Charlotte in order to enhance safety, improve reliability, improve operations, increase operational capacity for commuter and passenger rail, and improve the quality of life for nearby businesses and residents. The grade separation will also help accommodate the projected doubling of freight rail volume in the area, which is independent of the implementation of this Project. The term “grade separation” simply means to elevate one roadway/rail over the other by means of bridging.

This Project (P-5002) will facilitate and support future increased passenger rail service between Raleigh and Charlotte for the NCDOT Piedmont Improvement Program (PIP). The PIP consists of a series of capacity improvement and crossing safety projects that will facilitate the introduction of up to 12 daily (six round trip) passenger trains between Raleigh and Charlotte. These projects will also benefit the host railroads on the corridor, including NS, CSXT, and the North Carolina Railroad (NCRR).

The NCDOT Piedmont Corridor is part of the federally designated Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) corridor connecting northeastern states and Washington, DC through Richmond, VA to Raleigh and Charlotte, NC and Atlanta, GA. In Atlanta, the SEHSR extends southeast to Savannah, GA and Jacksonville, FL; and the Gulf Coast High Speed Rail (GCHSR) corridor extends southwest to New Orleans, LA, Mobile, AL, and Houston, TX.

The purpose of the Project is to remove the daily conflict between approximately 40 NS freight trains and 10 CSXT freight trains, as well as conflicts between passenger rail trains (both future and existing), CSXT/NS freight trains, and a new commuter rail service proposed by the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS).

1.2 PROCEDURAL HISTORY & NEPA COMPLIANCE

In January 2010, the FRA awarded to North Carolina \$545 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to continue North Carolina's development of high speed intercity passenger rail along the Raleigh to Charlotte segment of the SEHSR corridor. A portion of those ARRA funds were allocated for this Project.

The Project is included in the NCDOT *2012-2018 State Transportation Improvement Program* (STIP) as Project number P-5002. Funding for the Project is anticipated to be primarily from the ARRA grant.